



## National Environmental Policy Act

### What is NEPA?

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) is the mandate of any Federal Agency or department for the protection of the environment. NEPA is landmark environmental protection legislation establishing as a goal for federal decision making a balance between use and preservation of natural and cultural resources.

NEPA established the Council on Environmental Quality which coordinates federal environmental efforts and works closely with agencies in the development of environmental policies and initiatives. NEPA mandated examination of impacts on the environment resulting from federal actions. NEPA requires that all federal agencies prepare in-depth studies of the impacts of and alternatives to proposed major federal actions; use the information contained in such studies in deciding whether to proceed with actions; and diligently attempt to involve the interested and affected public before any decision affecting the environment is made.

NEPA was created to ensure Federal agencies consider the environmental impacts of their actions and decisions. NEPA requires all Federal agencies to consider the values of environmental preservation for all significant actions and prescribes procedural measures to ensure that those values are in fact fully respected. Federal agencies are required to systematically assess the environmental impacts of their proposed actions and consider alternative ways of accomplishing their missions in ways which are less damaging to the environment. Multi-disciplinary identification and analysis of impacts is also required.

The basic doctrine of NEPA requires the Federal Government to use all practicable means and measures to protect environmental values. Section 101 (b) of the Act states "it is the continuing responsibility of the Federal Government to use all practicable means, consistent with other essential considerations of national policy" to avoid environmental degradation, preserve historic, cultural, and natural resources, and "promote the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without undesirable and unintentional consequences." Therefore, NEPA makes environmental protection a part of the mandate of every Federal agency and department.

NEPA requires analysis and a detailed statement of the environmental impact of any proposed Federal action which significantly affects the quality of the human environment. Each agency designates a "responsible official" who must ensure NEPA issues are addressed as part of the agency's actions. All agencies must use a systematic interdisciplinary approach to environmental planning and evaluation of projects which may have an affect on the environment.

### WEB SITES WITH NEPA INFORMATION

- <http://planning.den.nps.gov/tools.cfm>
- <http://www.whitehouse.gov/ceq/>
- <http://www.epa.gov/epahome/laws.htm>

### How does NEPA relate to the CRMP?

- The CRMP is a planning document that will address the management of the Colorado River within Grand Canyon National Park.
- The EIS is a detailed environmental document analyzing the impact of the various management alternatives.
- The EIS will help NPS determine the preferred management alternative and that alternative will provide the basis for update of the CRMP.

### Public Scoping and NEPA

Public scoping of Federal actions allows the interested public and affected agencies the opportunity to provide comments, identify issues and offer solutions prior to the development of the environmental document.

- Scoping process - initial inventory of public and affected agencies (60 days+ for an EIS)
  - Formal Public Review of DEIS - 60 days minimum for an EIS
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## **CEQ SEC. 1501.7 SCOPING**

There shall be an early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed and for identifying the significant issues related to a proposed action. This process shall be termed scoping. As soon as practicable after its decision to prepare an environmental impact statement and before the scoping process the lead agency shall publish a notice of intent (Sec. 1508.22) in the Federal Register except as provided in Sec. 1507.3(e).

(a) As part of the scoping process the lead agency shall:

- Invite the participation of affected Federal, State, and local agencies, any affected Indian tribe, the proponent of the action, and other interested persons (including those who might not be in accord with the action on environmental grounds), unless there is a limited exception under Sec. 1507.3(c). An agency may give notice in accordance with Sec. 1506.6.
- Determine the scope (Sec. 1508.25) and the significant issues to be analyzed in depth in the environmental impact statement.
- Identify and eliminate from detailed study the issues which are not significant or which have been covered by prior environmental review (Sec. 1506.3), narrowing the discussion of these issues in the statement to a brief presentation of why they will not have a significant effect on the human environment or providing a reference to their coverage elsewhere.
- Allocate assignments for preparation of the environmental impact statement among the lead and cooperating agencies, with the lead agency retaining responsibility for the statement.
- Indicate any public environmental assessments and other environmental impact statements which are being or will be prepared that are related to but are not part of the scope of the impact statement under consideration.
- Identify other environmental review and consultation requirements so the lead and cooperating agencies may prepare other required analyses and studies concurrently with, and integrated with, the environmental impact statement as provided in Sec. 1502.25.
- Indicate the relationship between the timing of the preparation of environmental analyses and the agency's tentative planning and decision-making schedule.